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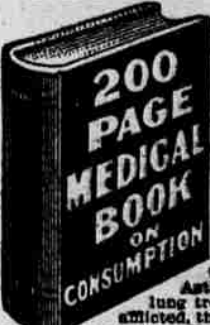
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"From Death to Life"

(Continued from page 3.)

"But you have said that you still contemplate suicide. Why?"

"By that threat, and in no other way, could I dissuade Mr. Brewster from immediate suicide. I have one week in which to prove to him that he may honorably live. At the end of that time if I have not succeeded he will carry out his determination. I have made a vow which I shall keep to save him as he saved me or to die as he dies. I had not meant to tell you this. For such recital, into which I was surprised by your unexpected quotation from the letter I can only beg your pardon."

"Do you think suicide a brave or manly thing?" she asked.

"I do not. I should have endured the unjust prison term, the world's unjust scorn. I should have lived, done my best in the world's work and endured my sufferings as best I could. Pardon me, I have sinned. I was weak. But I may plead that the suddenness of my misfortune caused my weakness. What I now consider is different. I am offering my life to save that of another. In no other way could I accomplish my aim."

"I will do what I can," she said. "I want to save Charles. I want to save you and I want to save the happiness of that girl."

That evening Tyler related to Brewster the story of his experience at the bank. While thus employed a messenger came with a letter from Catherine Ball.

"I write," she said, "in the belief that it is possible that you may have stayed your hand before carrying out the dread deed of which you wrote. If such be—which Heaven grant—I command you, by every sacred right, to desist. I esteem you no less than before, for your perfidy is counterbalanced by the fact that after all you are not incapable of real love, as I long believed. I grant your freedom and am glad of mine. I only ask that you will marry and not waste the years of the girl who loves and trusts you."

"You are a very genius at bungling, Tyler," Brewster said, when he had read the letter. "You have seen Catherine and told her that I am alive. That lifeless note tells the tale. She is willing to sacrifice her happiness for the sake of mine. Tell me the truth! You have seen her?"

"I have. She is a noble and lovely woman, and I marvel that you could desert her."

"No doubt. Perhaps you would marvel less if you saw the other."

"I am going to see the other. I have in my pocket the letter you were sending her. That unhappiness has thus far been spared her. I mean to test her love."

"That is not necessary, I know."

"Make this test. Write a check or draft for a hundred thousand dollars, if you can do so, in favor of Miss Laughlin. I will have it certified or accepted. I will take this to her with a note from you under your assumed name. Say that Mr. Brewster, your uncle—so small a deception may be pardoned—offers her this if she will accept it and give you honorable release. Tell her that you love her, but for her sake advise acceptance."

"She will refuse."

"Give me leave to try."

"And supposing she would accept?"

"You would return to your first love."

"Anna Laughlin is my first love. But if you mean Catherine Ball, it would do no good. She never will marry me or any other man. But I will do what you say."

Next evening, when the salesgirl returned from her work, she found Tyler awaiting her.

"I am a friend of Mr. Charles Brewster," he said, by way of introduction, "and I bring you a very important letter by his direction. I am to bear away your answer."

Miss Laughlin, a sweet-faced girl, with dark hair and violet blue eyes, was vastly surprised at a letter from the great Mr. Brewster, but when she saw the familiar writing her face broke into a smile.

She opened the letter and the accepted draft for a hundred thousand dollars fell out. She looked at it with a gasp of surprise, then turned pale as she began to read the letter. At the close she covered her face with her hands and moaned. Trembling, with great tears coursing down her face, she got her writing materials and wrote a short note, sealed it, addressed it to "Charles Ball," the name under which she knew her lover, and gave it to Tyler. He did not fail to note that she inclosed the draft. As he went from the door he heard behind him a great sob.

"What did I tell you?" shouted Brewster, when he had read the note. "Poor Anna! Poor Anna!"

"Why do you not keep your word and marry her? She loves you and is worthy of your love?"

"Have you forgotten Catherine Ball?"

"I have not. But Miss Ball has given you your freedom and desires you to accept."

"If I believed that I would be the happiest man on earth. But I do not believe it. When I think of what my grief would be if Anna were to marry another, I cannot live and feel the possibility that I am the living, daily cause of such grief in another. Tyler, my boy, you have lost. I release you and will keep my Saturday-night engagement alone."

"I refuse to accept release. But if two women love you, two will grieve when you are gone."

"Grief for the dead can be endured. More I knew that Anna would not sell her love for money. I know that she will not marry me if I tell her the truth that another woman lives unmarried because I have been faithless."

The next day Edward Tyler called once more on Catherine Ball.

"I have failed to convince him," he said, pale and grave. "It is not vanity which makes him believe in your love for him. It is his profound unwillingness to take chances with your happiness and his desire to give you the supreme proof of repentance for what, after all, was not his fault. My life cannot be saved. His may. I am going to sacrifice my life for his. I am going to ask you also for a sacrifice. Wrongly as he has acted, he has shown his appreciation of what he has done and is willing to die in what he fancies atonement. His life must be spared for the sake of his friends, for his own sake, for the goods works which he will do."

"And what do you ask of me? What can I do to assure him of what he will not believe?"

"I will ask that you will marry, or seem to do so, that he may be convinced and return to the girl who loves him. Listen, Miss Ball, to the proposal, fantastic though it may seem, which is the only way of saving this man, infatuated with his mad design. Let the minister be called and perform a ceremony by which, in appearance, your life will be united to mine. It will be in appearance only and not for long. A marriage certificate will be provided to be shown, if he does not believe, as he will, your letter. He will feel at last that he may live. A few hours more and you will know that my life has ceased and you will be as free as ever. None need know but the faithful clergyman and your chosen witnesses. Even for those few hours my name will not be a disgrace. My parents were poor, but there were none of better, more honorable race. My own life has never been stained by dishonorable deed. The certificate can be made bearing the name of Edward Mifford, my whole name being Edward Mifford Tyler. Thus Mr. Brewster would fail to understand."

"And would you really take your life to save that selfish man who drags others down to death with such unconcern?"

"It is a madness caused by his suffering," Tyler responded. "Few care for me, many for him. He saved my life. Why should I not sacrifice that which I owe to him alone?"

"Have you not a love, a sweetheart, who would mourn you as Charles's would him? None for whom you yourself greatly care?"

Tyler's face flushed to deepest crimson. "I will speak the truth. Boyish fancies aside, I have never cared for any woman, save one. That one—pardon my daring, for I speak but the words of one about to die—is yourself. The feeling that I had but a few days to live has forced into hours the experience of years. I have seen, admired, revered, loved. The sacrifice of my life is less because if I lived the greatest wish of my life never might be attained."

"I will agree to what you say," she said, abruptly.

A note was dispatched and the minister came and in the presence of the older servants, who were pledged to secrecy, the marriage ceremony was performed. The marriage certificate bore the bridegroom's full name, for Catherine rightly insisted that its production was unnecessary. Then she wrote a letter to Brewster.

"I have been married this day," she said, "to a man whom I esteem above all others I have ever met. Your folly in persisting in your unworthy suicidal design has hastened that marriage, but I assure you it would have taken place in any event. I am far happier than I ever could have been with you. Have done with vanity. Bear in mind that it is I who speak and that you have never known me to speak but the

frank truth. I am unutterably glad of all that has happened and hope soon to meet your bride. Owing to the suddenness of my own marriage it must remain secret for a time, but if you absurdly doubt my word, I refer you to the Reverend Doctor Allen, who performed the ceremony."

When the minister had gone and the strangely united couple were left in the library it was the woman who first spoke.

"I suppose you know," she said, "that it is possible for you to give me freedom without the sacrifice of your life. I would rather be a divorced woman than have your blood on my hands, as would be the case if I allowed you to die as you proposed. You can go to some far Western State and there take such steps as are necessary. Promise me that you will do as I say, that you will not commit the crime of self-destruction, and that you will come to say good-bye before you go."

The promise was made and Tyler again sought the presence of the man whose life for a few days had been so strangely bound up with his. He found him in a state of wild excitement and happiness.

"You have won! You have won!" he shouted. "We both are going to live. I have a letter from Catherine, and what do you think! What DO you think! She is married! Don't know who the lucky chap is; can't imagine! Anyway, I am now conscience clear and a little ashamed of myself—that's all! Now what can I do for you? Want to go into business? Want any sum? Name it! I can't do for you what you have done for me, but I can start you in any money-making business you choose to name, and all the old bank clerkships in the country may go to thunder!"

"I would like," said Tyler, after proper congratulations on Brewster's new frame of mind, "to undertake gold-seeking in Alaska, on a proper partnership basis. If I win, you win also. If I lose, you can stand it, and the prize is worth the risk."

"Go ahead, my boy! I'll back you in anything you undertake!"

Brewster was insistent that Tyler should witness his wedding, but the latter persisted in his desire to arrange matters for an early departure and the business details were soon arranged.

Tyler then went to say the words of farewell to the woman who, for the time, was legally his wife.

He told her of his arrangement with Brewster.

"I studied mining when I was in college," he said. "I believe that I shall be successful, and perhaps in a few years may be a rich man. Meantime, I will faithfully carry out your wish in the matter of giving you freedom. But if, after a few years, I have won such a fortune that you will know yours is no temptation to me I will return and, unless you forbid, will offer you courtship with the hope of proving myself worthy of your love."

"But if you do not care for the fortune which I have, why should I care for the one you are going to get?"

"I don't think you would. I do not mean that."

"You mean that you would try by courtship to get me to care for yourself?"

"That is what I mean."

"Then why not save time by undertaking your courtship at once, without going to Alaska? Alaska is a dreadfully long way off."

"But I promised to give you freedom."

"You promised to do as I wished in that matter. I do not want my freedom. I believe in you and trust you absolutely. I am your wife. Are you going to desert me?"

Up to this time Catherine had had a very distant and star-worshipping sort of lover, but in an instant that was past, and she was answered by a whirlwind of hugs and kisses that would have convinced her had she needed convincing that it was herself and not her money that her husband loved.

Brewster was both surprised and pleased when Tyler informed him of his intention to wait until after the wedding, and was somewhat mystified a little later to learn that the Alaska business was off and that Tyler wanted no financial assistance whatsoever. But everything was cleared up when, on the evening of his wedding, Catherine begged to introduce her husband to the newly wedded pair.

"You were for sending him off to Alaska, to be eaten up by polar bears," she said, "but I have persuaded him to stay."

THE END.

Lincoln as a Poet

It is not generally known that Abraham Lincoln ever attempted poetry, but his copybook shows this effusion exactly as it was written at a very early age: "Abraham Lincoln, his hand and pen: He may be good, but God knows when."